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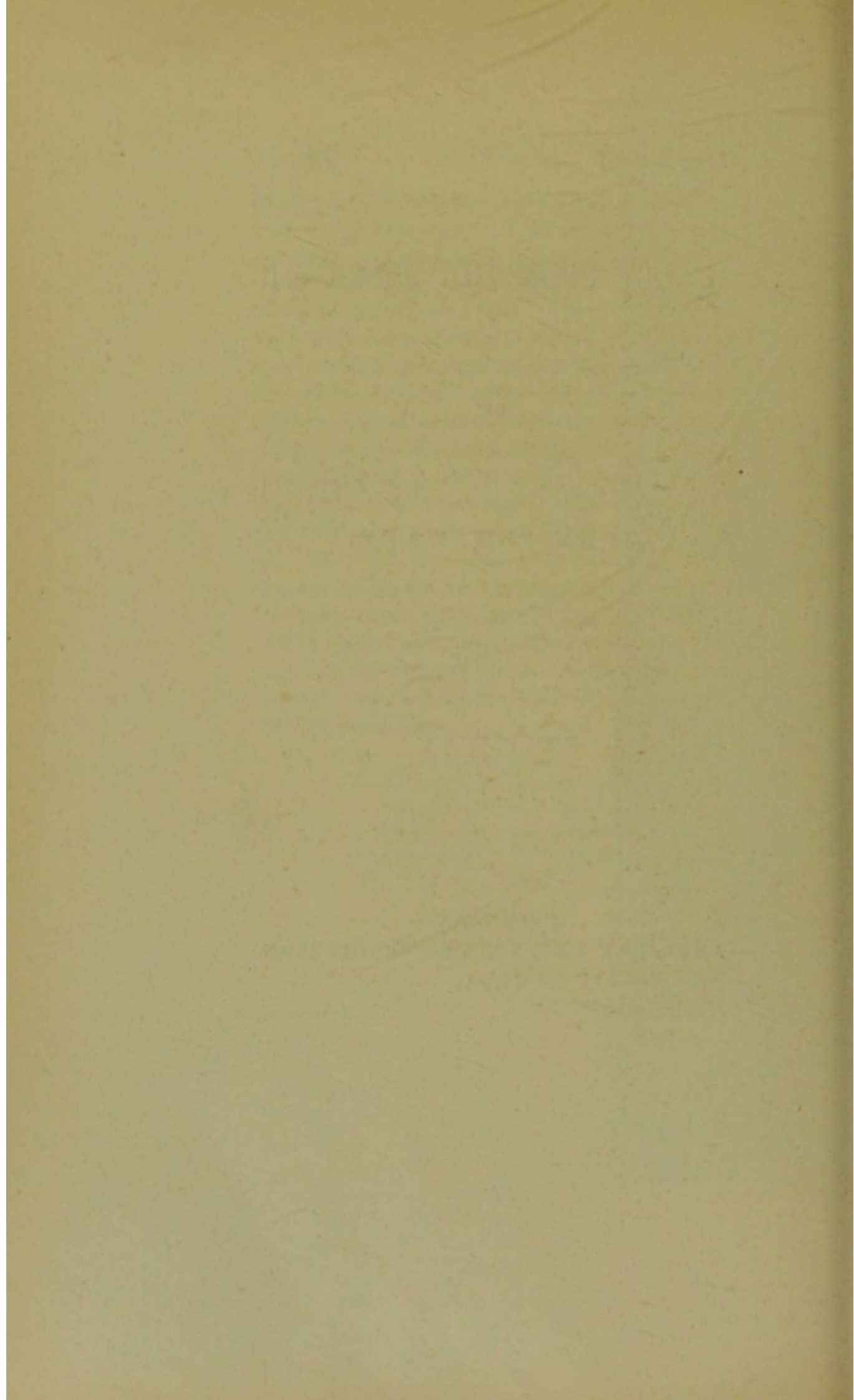
# RALLY UPON THE RESERVE!

BY

JOHN F. W. WARE.

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BOSTON:  
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.  
1864.



## RALLY UPON THE RESERVE!

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SKIRMISHERS! the enemy presses you. He is stronger and more alert than was supposed. He is in force, on your front and flank. You are exposed every way. The danger is imminent. The conflict is against you. You cannot stand. Hark! The bugle! What does it say? Retreat? No. "*Rally upon the reserve!*"

We are deployed as skirmishers in the great life-battle. We do not go into the conflict in battalions or by divisions. We do not stand shoulder to shoulder. We cannot touch our comrade by the elbow. We go against the great allied powers of evil singly. It is our single arm against the combined foe. The man next us, — the nearest, dearest friend we have, cannot help us. He has his own work. He has his post. He is under orders to hold it, as you are to hold yours. He cannot think of you. He cannot help you. His duty lies in front. You are alone. He is alone. Every man is alone. Not in solid column, not as a huge force, a combined humanity, may we hurl ourselves against the old, hoary pow-

ers of sin, but as we can singly. We are as skirmishers in this great strife.

The enemy presses. We have struggled long, some of us well, some but indifferently. The day is far spent. We are worn with its heat and its toil. We have stood our ground as well as we could. But the enemy gains, and we begin to falter. The fight is fearful in front, and there are symptoms that the flank is turned. There have been dropping shots upon the right and the left, and a fresh pressure in front. What shall we do? Retreat? That were ignominious, that were to lose all, that were to surrender the cause as well as ourselves, that were recreance to duty and to God. Shall we fight on? To what good against such odds? Hark! A bugle-call! What does it say? — “*Rally upon the reserve!*”

Yes! rally upon the reserve! That is it. Vain to run, vain to fall back, vainer still to contend single-handed. “*Rally upon the reserve!*” We are saved!

What is this reserve to which the imperilled soul may fly, and find so sure a succor? Do you not know? Can it be other than GOD?

One strange mistake men make, — and they have persistently made it from the beginning, — is in the attempt to do God’s work without God. This life-duty of ours is not a something that man sets himself about; neither do human governments, or laws, or society. Our work is of God, — your work, my

work, every man's work. We never in any way get divorced from that. He sends us into the world; He marks out our duty; to Him we are to report. And what a blessed thing it is for man that he has a God to fall back upon. It is that, — God with man, which has made every great success since the world began. Cæsar did not make a great success, nor Alexander, nor Bonaparte. They fought without God; they fought against God. Worldly men and thoughtless reckon them the great men. They call them conquerors. They say their names are immortal. Can you show me to-day anything either of them did? Where are the empires they founded at such cost of treasure and tears? What good thing, dying, have they bequeathed mankind? The humblest man who makes two blades of grass grow where one grew before is rightly called a benefactor. Were they benefactors? Bonaparte himself could say, that in a half-century a half-page of general history would be all that would be given to him, while the name of Jesus would continue to grow greater and brighter. And yet what were Christ's victories, and which, dying, seemed most likely to leave a name and a power behind? Napoleon lived for himself. He neglected for his own eternal good what he never would have neglected in a battle. He had no reserve. God was not with him. Jesus lived for God. God overruled all adverse things in his life. He could always, did always, fall back

on Him. God was the never-forgotten power behind. So his defeats became victories. Angels crowned him Lord of all.

Every real work, everything which has survived the shock of centuries, everything which has benefited man has been because the worker recognized the need and sought the help of God. He had always God as a reserve, in every doubt and duty and trouble. And God aided him to do better and wiser than he knew. How striking this truth is in the Scripture. Moses did not lead out the children of Israel from their bondage, and shape his wise laws in their behalf and rule them in their barbarous and rebellious wanderings of himself alone. You see him going to and fro between the mountain and the people. He shapes the law and moulds the multitude as God wills. "Thus saith the Lord," is invariably the authority for his act. In every perplexity and peril he looks to Jehovah. David, though he did many sinful things, always came back in lowliest penitence to his allegiance, and leaned on God, his rod, his staff, his shield. Paul's bonds, scourgings, imprisonments, persecutions, were made light through the strength that he derived from God, while his whole life long Jesus never attempted anything without seeking the blessing, without acknowledging the aid, of his Father. See him at the Temptation, when the Devil presses him with every cunning wile; see him when the powers of hate and dark-

ness have compassed him, and, betrayed by a disciple, denied by a friend, deserted by all, he stands at the tribunal to receive the fatal decree. Does he stand alone, or is there some great reserve of power behind by which he is sustained, through which he conquers? In him, in each and all, you see, not men self-dependent, self-sufficient, but conscious of, and using, that reserve which God in his infinite love and mercy vouchsafes to all. He is ever ready to help those who seek help of him, to be that all-sustaining, all-conquering power by which a human soul is made more than master of the wiles that beset him.

Just as much must you and I in the work we have to do in life lean upon God. That work is not to be done without God. He places us here. He marks out our duty. To him we must report. It will not do to leave him out of the account, to go on living just as if there were no God and no account to give. Many men do that. What do they make of life? Good merchants, farmers, soldiers, successful enough as men count success. But these do not make *life*. They are only certain occupations of life, a use of certain powers or faculties. *Life* is what the soul is, the part of man that cannot die, the part that is called up and questioned by and by. Men who are without God do not *live*. They miss all the higher quality and power of life. They miss all of that *more abundant life* which Jesus



said he had come to bring. God is the centre and source of all life,— of the soul as of the tree, the ocean as the star. In him we live and move and have our being.

“ Man's business is to seek  
His strength in God alone,—  
And e'en an angel would be weak  
Who trusted in his own.”

I dare say some of you may have been trying the experiment of living without God. You have not seen what he had to do with your life. You have got along, you think, very well without him. But has it been so very well, after all? Are you not, in your serious moments, in your troubles, when great questions rise, when conflicting duties harass, when temptations press, when parting and pain and grief come, conscious of weakness? Do you not wish you had some ready, near, sufficient power to rely on,— some reserve that, when your own ability is exhausted, you can confidently go to?

Every man wishes that. At times every man feels out toward help, gropes after a staff of support, a something that shall encourage or hold him up, and be to him what he is conscious he cannot be to himself. In camp you know something of this. There are allurements, temptations, about you strangely powerful. There are dangers constantly threatening you, some of them wholly new, unlike those you were exposed to at home, while the old

ones get a new power from your changed conditions. There is, beside, the longing for home, and anxiety about those you love. You cannot bear these alone. God has not made you so that you could. The temptations will overcome your integrity, dangers fill you with apprehension, the thoughts of home eat the manly courage out of your hearts. Your comrades can do nothing for you. It is little use to go to the chaplain. He may give you a little relief, a moment's comfort; but he does not and cannot help you to bear, to overcome. Nothing of man can: and there is our terrible mistake! Our reserve—the power greater than ourselves—is not in these things in which we are so apt to seek it. The man who gets drunk thinks he can take the pledge. That is his reserve. He falls back on that and feels himself secure. His friends take courage. The gambler, the liar, the licentious man, fortify themselves in like manner. All men trying to reform themselves seek help from some person, circumstance, change, the thing outside themselves, the crutch, the staff that supports, not the vital power that heals. It will not do. No man is safe so. It is still the power of man, or something less than man, on which he leans. The power of God is the only sure reserve. With that behind him every man is safe.

“Man is naught, is less than naught;  
Thou, our God, art all in all.”

The same thing man in every relation and condition, however exalted, however humble, always needs. We only do not see the need in our common daily duties because we have become so well satisfied with leaving the God-power out of our daily lives. They might be so grand, and we let them be so low! Jesus Christ lived to show what life is, and no man *lives* except as he has that which was in Him who said, "I can of mine own self do nothing," and who showed, under every duty and in every trial, that he was not trying to stand alone, but looking back toward, leaning upon, a Divine strength.

Do not you do anything less. God is to be found of any who will honestly seek him, and to be known by any who honestly try to love him. He is not a great power away off, too much occupied in great things to care for little ones, but he counts every hair, sees every sparrow that falls, and is most at home in the heart of the most childlike believer. He is our first, best, constant friend. He is the *reserve* on which every human soul in its want and peril may fall back and be secure. Men may go on for a long time in seeming prosperity and become confident and self-exultant, like skirmishers, elated at their little gain, pushing forward into the very arms of the waiting, wary foe. That will be the moment of disaster unless the wise commander have near and ready a reserve, in time to check the onslaught and roll back the assault. So, the time comes to every man — it comes again and again to most —

when trials, dangers, temptations, crowd upon and would crush him. They are apt to find him self-confident, presuming upon the past power or gain, — without a reserve. It is the *presumption* that conquers the man rather than the temptation or the trial. But let these come to one who has a reserve of faith in God, who has not, at the emergency, to feel about, if haply he may find Him; let them come to one who has a consciousness of His nearness, and His willing support. Pressed, weary, faltering, he will quit every lesser support, the reeds that bend and break; he will rally upon his reserve, — GOD, — and be safe.

You know that in no one thing does a general more surely show his skill than in the selection, the position, the handling of his reserve. It must be sufficient, it must be well disciplined, it must be near, it must be easily moved. At any moment it may be needed for the sternest duty. The fate of the day, of a cause, of a people, may hinge upon it. Many a defeat has been disgraceful because the reserve was too far away, was not ordered up at the right moment, or proved not the stuff for the crisis hour; many a struggle, that long hung trembling in the balance, has been turned to decisive victory by the fresh squadrons marching to the front, relieving the shattered and weary columns. You remember how Waterloo was won. And every conflict of yours may be a Waterloo, — a decisive victory, if God is near.

In the great life-battle we all must wage, it becomes us never to overlook the fact of probable disaster, however brave and self-assured we may be, if we have not a near, sufficient reserve in God. Make him as your "next of kin," — the Friend before all friends, to whom you not only *may* go, but *do* go for light and strength and guidance always. Then in the crisis hours, — the moments when the powers of ill all seem mustered, the moments which decide the weal or woe of years, the good or the bad of all time, the joy or misery of Eternity, — you will have no fear, no anxious searching, no painful waiting or doubt, but God with you and in you, the power beyond all powers, the reserve to insure you victory.

" My God with me in every place!  
 Firmly does the promise stand,  
 On land or sea, with present grace  
 Still to aid us near at hand.  
 If you ask, ' Who is with thee? '  
 God is here, — my God with me!

" My God for me! I dare to say, —  
 God the portion of my soul!  
 Nor need I tremble in dismay  
 When around me troubles roll.  
 If you ask, ' What comforts thee? '  
 It is this, — God is for me.

" In life, in death, with God so near,  
 Every battle I shall win,  
 Shall boldly press through danger here,  
 Triumph over every sin!  
 ' What! ' you say, ' a victor be? '  
 No, not I, but God in me! "